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Caleb Rocque- Abolitionist



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Chapter 1 by Business Wolf

“Benjamin! Fetch me a barrel of water!” Master said. Nearby, Benjamin was sitting in the corner with his chains piercing his skin. Benjamin was my closest friend, even though we were polar opposites. He was a scrawny child, barely any meat on his bones. I was a tall and well-built teenager. He had short, prickly black hair; I had long, thick chestnut hair. He was poor, I was one of the richest kids in town and he was what people would call black. I was white. “Benjamin, I thought I told you to go get me water, boy! Caleb, unlock him. NOW!” I went over to take off the chains. Benjamin was sitting there with his legs crossed, eyes closed.

“Caleb. Come with me to fetch Master’s water” Benjamin said as I unlocked the cold steel chains and took them off of his wrists.

"I do not believe I can do that," I remarked. "I have work to do here. I am an apprentice- he is my teacher. I am required to stay here and work with the metal. You are a slave- you are not paid and not expected to know what you are doing."

“Yes, and I do know what I am doing. Go ask Master.” I walked into the welding room, and found Master working on a new sword. Master Dunrock was a blacksmith and I was his apprentice. He was a big man, muscular with a barrel chest. He had big, bushy eyebrows that made him look

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"I suppose... very well. You may be dismissed for the well. After that, I need you to take this to Thomas Lincoln when I am finished," he replied. "Until then, feel free to work on the sword you started."

"Yessir," I replied quickly. I liked Master Lincoln. He had a son, Abraham, who was six years older than I was. Master Lincoln was not far from the shop. He was just a block from the shop. He was nice, and he was in the direction of the well. I walked out and turned to Benjamin. "Shall we go to the well, sir?"

"Yes. Why do you call me sir?" He questioned me as we walked out of the shop with our wooden bucket. "I am a poor slave boy. You are an apprentice, you are more important." Benjamin winced, and rubbed his neck. I looked at the back side of his neck and there was a big split, probably from a whip. "Master whipped me for slacking off."

"That is something he would do," I replied. "You go on ahead. I have to go talk to Mr. Lincoln." I knocked on the door, and Elizabeth, Thomas's house maid, answered the door.

"Hello, Mr. Rocque! Would you like to speak with Abraham?"

"Not today Ms. Elizabeth! I am here to talk to Master Thomas," I replied. "I am here to confirm an order."

"Okay, I will go get him for you," she replied. "Hey, do you not have work to be doing? Master Dunrock has Mr. Benjamin, yes?"

"Yes, ma'am. Benjamin is busy at the well," I answered. She closed the door to go get Master Thomas. I stood at the door, admiring the log cabin that Master Thomas built. Master Thomas was an abolitionist, and this was called "Base Camp." Base Camp was the last stop of the Underground Railroad in Illinois. Springfield was a big town, and there were a lot of places for slaves to hide, or to live. Master Dunrock was from Mississippi, and he brought Benjamin with him when he moved to Springfield. Master would always brag about how Benjamin was the best slave available at the auction and that the slave traders knew he was strong. The slave traders called Benjamin "the Golden Boy" because before the traders purchased Benjamin, he was a really strong child and Benjamin's old owner told the traders that Benjamin had never been sick. At that moment, I could see Benjamin was in line at the well and Thomas came to the door.

"Well look who the wind blew in! Caleb Rocque! What can I do for you, son?" He said with a

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“... and the very THOUGHT of you FAILING me, an just LOOK what you have DONE!” He took out the whip. “I!” Whip. “WILL!” Whip. “NOT!” Whip. “STAND!” Whip. “FOR!” Whip. “THIS!” Whip. “YOU!” Whip. “INTOLERANT!” Whip. “FOOL!” Whip Whip Whip. I could not stand to watch, yet could not look away. Benjamin was on the ground, unable to move. “Stand up, boy,” Master growled. Benjamin struggled. “MOVE, BOY!” Benjamin struggled more, making it clear that he was paralyzed.

“I cannot feel anything!” Benjamin sobbed. That was when Master pulled out the shiny pistol. He aimed it right between Benjamin’s eyes.

“If you do not get up, you will be killed. Now, get up.” I ran to the shop, and got the sword by the door. I ran back into the plaza. A crowd was gathered around. I was just about to push my way through, until I heard gunshots. Only one thought went through my mind. Benjamin Dunrock is Dead! I raised my sword above my head, and slashed Master’s back.

“You INSOLENT FOOL!” I yelled. “I DO NOT care that SLAVERY is in the BIBLE, IT is WRONG! GEORGE Washington said IN HIS WILL that HE WOULD RELEASE HIS SLAVES! Yet YOU cannot be like THE FOUNDING FATHER OF OUR COUNTRY!” He then turned around and shot me. I straggled for a moment, and put my hand on my chest, feeling the blood come out of my heart while I died.

Only there was no blood.

I looked down, and saw a shell stuck in my left leg. All sound flushed away. Before I fell, I saw Thomas tackle Master to the ground. Then, I fell asleep.

I woke up in a big room that I did not recognize. My leg was sore. My ears rang. I sat up, and a jolt of pain ran to my leg, and I yelped. Thomas stood up from the chair right next to me. I did not see him until that moment. He looked down at me. “How you doin’ son?”

“I am in a lot of pain. Where am I?” I replied.

“Well, you are in a place I like to call ‘Slavery Central’ at Base Camp. This is where I keep the runaways for the night so I can conduct them to the next stop, or so they can find a place here,” Mr. Lincoln explained.

“What happened to Master Dunrock?” I mumbled weekly.

“Mr. Dunrock was arrested for the captivity and murder of Benjamin Folstad. As for Benjamin...

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"What do I have to do to become an abolitionist?" I asked Mr. Lincoln. "Can I be your apprentice?"

"When can you start? I need someone to help with the railroad," he asked me.

"As soon as possible, sir!"

Epilogue

I worked on the railroad from the time I was eighteen - when Benjamin died- until I was forty-five years old. The Civil War started and I fought under the command of Ulysses S. Grant, another Illinois man, for the Union. Abraham, Thomas' son, was President of the United States.. I was General Grant's right hand an. Ever since the day Benjamin was shot and killed, I was an abolitionist. I took up Master Dunrock's blacksmith business at nineteen and named it BC. Some thought it meant Base Camp, others thought it meant Blade Crafters, but in reality, I named it Benjamin Cross. I forged Union weapons in the shop.

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